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PATENT
[Signature]

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of:
William D. Morgan et al.

Serial No.: 10/003,037

Filed: November 2, 2001

For: COVERING SYSTEMS AND VENTING
METHODS

Group Art Unit: 1723

Examiner: Unknown

Atty. Dkt. No.: IAEC:006US/MTG

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37 C.F.R. § 1.8

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Date Mark T. Garrett

RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION DATED JANUARY 19, 2003

Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Commissioner:

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MAY 27 2003

GROUP 1700

This paper is submitted in response to the Office Action dated January 19, 2003. A
petition for a two-month extension of time is included below. Granting of this petition will bring
the due date for this response to May 19, 2003. Reconsideration of this application is
respectfully requested.

AMENDMENT

Please amend the claims as follows:

24. (Amended) The covering system of claim 16, further comprising:

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a service opening positioned within the first membrane, the service opening being defined by a service opening edge and being spaced apart from the first float and the gas-relief openings;

a second flotation member coupled to the first membrane so as to elevate the service opening edge above a body containing some liquid when the system is used; and

a service opening membrane coupled to the service opening edge.

REMARKS

A. Status of the Claims

Claims 1-32 were filed. Claim 24 has been amended to replace "escape" with "relief" and, thus, correct an inadvertent typographical error that does not affect the patentability of the claim or narrow it in any way. No other claims have been amended. Thus, claims 1-32 remain pending. A marked-up copy of amended claim 24 is attached as Appendix A in compliance with Rule 121. A clean, unofficial copy of the claims in amended form is attached as Appendix B for the Office's convenience.

B. Claims 1-13, 16-23, and 28-32 Are Patentable over Wilson

The Office rejects claims 1-13, 16-23, and 28-32 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,438,863 to Wilson et al. (Wilson). Applicants respectfully traverse.

1. Claims 1-13

Independent claim 1 is directed to a covering system that includes a first membrane and a first flotation member coupled to the first membrane. The first flotation member includes a first float and a first float compartment membrane, which is coupled to the first membrane. The covering system also includes, in relevant part, a first plurality of gas-relief passageways positioned either within the first float compartment membrane, or within the first membrane and



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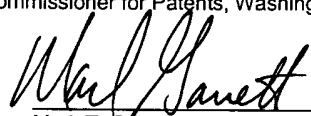
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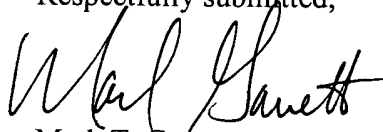
RE: U.S. Patent Application No. 10/003,037 entitled "*COVERING SYSTEMS AND VENTING METHODS*" – by William D. Morgan, et al.
Matter No: 10110236 / IAEC:006US

Commissioner:

Please find enclosed:

1. A Response to Office Action dated January 19, 2003;
2. A Request for an Extension of Time of two months to and including May 19, 2003;
3. A check in the amount of \$205.00 as the fee for the extension of time; and
3. A return postcard to acknowledge receipt of these materials. Please date stamp and mail this postcard.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark T. Garrett
Reg. No. 44,699

MTG/jch

Encl.: as noted
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